



**State of Wisconsin**  
**Department of Public Instruction**  
Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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**\*\*\*NEWS RELEASE\*\*\***

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## Two Wisconsin educators receive Milken Family Foundation awards

MADISON—Teachers from schools in Lake Mills and Kimberly received 2005 Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards in surprise all-school assemblies held on Wednesday. In addition to the recognition at their school, each Milken educator will receive a \$25,000 award which can be used in any way they choose.

The educators were selected without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel facilitated by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Recipients are

- Julie Cunningham, a chemistry teacher at Lake Mills High School; and
- Kendra Naef, a family and consumer science teacher at Kimberly High School.

“The Milken National Educator program is the largest teacher recognition program in the United States and makes a visible commitment of rewarding and encouraging exceptional educational talent,” said State Superintendent Elizabeth Burmaster. “These teachers focus their classroom practice on student learning and success. They are leaders in their schools and communities. It is a great honor to join the Milken Foundation in holding them up at a national level as being exactly what good teachers should be.”

Burmaster also commended the Milken National Educator Award Program for acknowledging the tremendous contribution that educators make to their students, and for the potential the program has to inspire young people to consider education as a career. “Research repeatedly shows that the single most important school-based factor in student achievement is the quality of the teacher in the classroom, so attracting dedicated young people to the profession is vital to Wisconsin’s mission to close the achievement gap and ensure success for every student,” Burmaster added.

(more)

This is the seventh year the Milken Family Foundation has presented its National Educator Awards in Wisconsin. Established in 1985 with the first awards made in 1987, the Milken Family Foundation will present \$2.5 million in financial awards and honor 100 outstanding educators in 48 states and the District of Columbia this year. The foundation has recognized more than 2,100 exceptional educators and awarded more than \$54 million since the Milken National Educator Awards Program began.

“Excellence must not be the exception in our schools, but rather the norm. Talented teachers are the key to ensuring high-quality educational opportunities for all students,” said Lowell Milken, chairman and co-founder of the Milken Family Foundation. “By recognizing and rewarding outstanding educators each year, we focus the nation’s attention on the critical need to attract, retain, and motivate caring, capable people to the American teaching profession.”

Recipients of the Milken Educator Awards are selected on the basis of numerous criteria, including exceptional educational talent as demonstrated by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school; exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession; strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and an engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues, and the community.

The recipients will receive their \$25,000 awards at the Milken Family Foundation National Education Conference, an all-expense-paid professional development conference to be held in May 2006 in Washington, D.C. The educators also are invited to join the Milken Educator Network, a coalition of top educators who have access to a variety of expert resources to help cultivate and expand innovative programs in their classrooms, schools, and districts.

The Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards were created to reward, retain, and attract the highest caliber professionals to our nation’s schools. The Milken Family Foundation National Educator Awards Program, dubbed the “Oscars of Teaching” by *Teacher Magazine*, is the largest educator awards program in the nation. For more information, call (310) 570-4800 or visit the Milken Family Foundation website at <http://www.mff.org>.

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